

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

Abstract

Cultural identity is the result of a historical development process and could become a source of wealth within the conditions of an appropriate management. One of the possibilities to materialize this relation is by it through cultural tourism. The paper aims to highlight the particularities of this type of tourism in rural areas and the ways how public administration could be involved in providing the balance between the needs of residents and the needs of visitors. In fact, it is constructed an argument for the positive correlation between cultural tourism and local development, departing from the premise that this could manifest itself only if the local public administration is involved in the design and implementation of coherent programs, that follows the milestones of a realistic visions, built on the base of objective and detailed knowledge of the local context.

Keywords: heritage, cultural tourism, public administration, rural area

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MANAGEMENTUL EFICIENT AL TURISMULUI CULTURAL ÎN SPAȚIUL RURAL

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Rezumat

Identitatea culturală este rezultatul unui proces istoric de dezvoltare și poate deveni o sursă de bunăstare în condițiile unui management corespunzător. Una din posibilitățile de materializare a acestei legături este valorificarea ei prin turism cultural. Lucrarea își propune să evidențieze particularitățile acestui tip de turism în spațiul rural și modul în care administrația publică se poate implica pentru asigurarea unui echilibru între nevoile rezidenților și nevoile vizitatorilor. În esență se formulează un argument pentru corelația pozitivă dintre turismul cultural și dezvoltarea locală, plecând de la premise că aceasta se poate manifesta numai dacă administrația publică locală se implică în formularea și implementarea unor programe coerente, care urmăresc reperele unei viziuni realiste, construite pe baza cunoașterii obiective și detaliate a contextului local.

Cuvinte cheie: patrimoniu, turism cultural, administrație publică, spațiu rural



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1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism comprises a wide range of activities that allow experiences related to art, heritage and special character of a space. The uniqueness of the combinations of nature, humans, and human-nature interactions is the main driver of this type of tourism, since each new location means new experiences, and even the same location could be explored several times before someone decides that it could not bring more for its personality.

In rural areas communities have a long and eventful history which is less prominent since they are not places of important decisions in the history. Many scholars recognized this important quality of the rural people and highlighted it in various ways. Moreover, nowadays there is a formal recognition of the rural community's stewardship role for cultural heritage and rural landscape since governmental policies focus moved from agriculture to rural development (Cândeș et al., 2006).

Local development in rural areas was for a prolonged period of time locked to the agricultural potential of a certain area. In this respect we could also mention a shift in focus, since now agriculture is regarded only as a part of the rural economy, which should be diversified in order to withstand the effects of dynamic transformation that occur in the economic and social context due to forces like globalization, technological progress, resource scarcity, migration, and climate change (Bran & Ioan, 2009; Radulescu, 2008).

Cultural tourism, rural culture and economic diversification are the milestones that define the scope of this paper, which intend to build an argument for the positive correlation between cultural tourism and local development in rural areas and for the intervention of local public administration as a catalyst of the interaction. The first part deals with the particularities of cultural tourism in rural areas, followed by several examples of good practices. Finally, it is discussed the role of public administration which should secure the coherence of individual initiatives and the balance between the needs of residents and the needs of visitors.

2. CULTURAL TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

The rural area is the expression of humans' historical effort to put in his service the physical components of the space and nature. It is a space shaped by humans in accordance with their needs, created by his work and filled with his creations (Cândeș et al., 2006). Rural communities emerged then human population became stable and built their first homes and made the first arrangements for

agricultural production. All these relations and experiences are preserved through traditions, customs and interests, expressed in the landscape by different types of rural areas.

The cultural resources for tourism could be grouped in four categories, as follows:

- Physical resources: historic sites, museum villages, landscapes, dress, views, museums, entries, farms, ranches, heritage buildings, and villages;
- Heritage activities: work, religious, socialization, shopping, holidays, crafts, schooling, festivals, landmark events;
- Ambient heritage qualities: climate, noise, smells, and light;
- Intangible heritage factors: sense of place, culture, traditions, values, language, and social structure.

Given this wide range of cultural resources it is not avoidable one question: which are the factors that prevent many local communities to harness such a rich resource? The answer could rely on how these resources are recognized and managed, but it could go in a more abstract but important realm. Thus, the benefits of tourism for local economy are derived from its benefits via the multiplying effect of this economic activity. Nevertheless, cultural tourism in rural areas also has costs. For a better understanding we listed the benefits and costs in table 1.

TABLE 1 BENEFITS AND COST OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

Benefits	Costs
Increased employment	Investment of public funds
New individual and business income	Increased servicing costs
Income diversification	Low paying jobs
Improved tax base	Depletion of cultural resources
Higher community visibility	Inauthentic development
Preservation of cultural resources	Social stress on local population
Better use of existing infrastructure	Congestion
Revival of crafts and traditions	Overuse of community facilities
Realizing wider social change	Pollution
	Negative changes in cultural values
	Economic discrepancies

Source: Bran, Dinu and Simon, (1999). *Economia turismului si mediul inconjurator*. Bucharest: Economica Publishing.

The relation between cost and benefits will be different from one rural area to another and this is the first point where local administration has a decision to make. It is important to note that the positive correlation between cultural tourism and local development is taken for granted, with no further research

to reveal the concrete benefits, but also the costs. Bran et al. (2000) and Rojanschi and Bran (2002) made some remarks in this respect, revealing the destroying effects tourism could have on local culture.

In fact, most of the rural tourism is developed having as core resource the rural culture. Its typology diversified in accordance with the customers' willingness to be more or less close to rural activities. Rural tourism is a very dynamic economic sector, as it results from data reported in European Union: 90 thousand units for accommodation along with other 360-450 thousand related enterprises. This total represents 15% of Europe's tourism accommodation capacity and 20% of it is agro-tourism pensions (farms where customers take part in agricultural and other traditional activities). Rural tourism has a total turnover of more than 13,000 million euro, involves 600-700 euro expenses per trip and 70 euro expenses per day; approximately 7% of international travels have rural areas as destination; 3-4% annual increase; France, Germany and Spain hold the most attractive rural tourism destinations.

3. RURAL TOURISM IN EUROPE

As examples of good practice in rural tourism management were chosen the France, Germany, Italy, and Portugal.

France is considered the cradle of rural tourism where this activity became a tradition and the supply is the most diversified in terms of organization and promotion. Most of French equipments could be named rustic houses and controlled, homologated and reserved through the National Federation "Gîtes de France". This federation comprises 38000 proprietors, more than 55000 unit for accommodation, publish 2 million guides. The demand is also impressive: 30 million tourist-days, 23% coming from abroad (Nistoreanu et al., 2010).

There are various association nominated as follows: "*Gîtes de France*", "*Logis et Auberges de France*", "*Bienvenu a la ferme*", "*Stations vertes de vacances*", "*Relais et Chateaux*", "*Relais du Silence*", "*Camping et Caravaning*" etc. Accommodation could be traditional or modern, but with specific architecture and is classified in five quality categories. The types available are: Gîte rural; Chambre et table d'hotes; Gîte d'enfants et Gîte pour adolescents; Camping et Paire naturelle; Gîte d'etape și Gîte de sejour; Gîte de group; Chalets-loisirs.

In Germany rural tourism is deployed in more than two thirds of its rural area. In the German hospitality guide more than 10000 offers are proposed, comprising a variety of activities such as: cycling, horse-back itineraries; visits to craftsmen; naturalist trips (image hunting); and trekking. The accommodation capacity is used 31 weeks per year (Nistoreanu et al., 2010).

In Italy rural tourism is known as green holidays and has as main component agro-tourism. The guide of hospitality is published periodically and is now at its 35th edition. It contains information, addresses, description of equipments and typical products. Along with traditional culture and landscape, rural tourism is attractive by: traditional cooking, renowned wines, dances and folklor, architecture, historical sites, poetry and the legend of each settlement.

Piemonte, Lombardia, Trentino, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Toscana, Lazio, Abruzzo, Umbria, Campania, Puglia, Calabria, Sicilia are most attractive rural tourism destinations.

4. MANAGEMENT OF RURAL CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism resources and local development levels are not always correlated. This is an indication that there are a number of factors that influence this relationship. Some of them could be controlled by local authorities. Thus, in case that cultural tourism is acknowledged as a viable option for local development, it should be considered a range of actions which include:

- Integrated planning and management: the local development plan should include tourism as part of the economic support. Tourism in general, and cultural tourism is not an exception, means numerous support activities, which has to be available on the local site. If this is not possible, there is the risk that benefits will leak to other areas;
- Integrated impact assessment: the impact of tourism development should be examined in a holistic manner, taking in account the possible interactions among different changes brought in by tourism;
- Development managed at local level: the planning and development process must involve local initiative and entrepreneurship. Locally owned businesses are more likely to respect local concerns and help to develop the human capital;
- Training: in order to safeguard benefits in the local horizon it is important that residents have the competences needed for each activity, including management and planning;
- Community initiative: some activities that are important for tourism, but has little chance to be performed in a competitive market should not be deployed as businesses. Their role could be crucial in training, as an internship stage for local entrepreneurs;
- Infrastructure development: rural areas are remote areas where infrastructure is far less developed than in cities. Although tourism infrastructure is important, it is not the first option.

Transportation, communication, utilities are priorities in this respect. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the low level of infrastructure could be part of the cultural resources and struggling to create a modern infrastructure could blow up the core of the attractiveness;

- Protection of cultural and environmental resources: tourists do not take with them almost anything, but their presence should not deteriorate the resources;
- Integrated attractions management: means a number of actions that allow the access of a rural community on tourism markets, such as joint marketing and promotion and event planning.

Most of these actions cannot be performed without the active implication of the local public administration. Therefore, it is important that individuals realize the need to be more careful in their political decision, and give more weight for leaders that prove their knowledge, skill, and deep respect for community values. At this stage, other levels of public administration could and should be involved, since many communities are very resistant to change and even to entrepreneurship (Radulescu & Ioan, 2007), necessitating an external impulse.

Local administration involvement in the promotion and development of cultural tourism in rural areas should also take in account the following:

- cultural tourism and local development has a direct relation then it is accomplished a convergence between the private interests of rural population and the social interests of heritage preservation;
- rural population has a key role to play in the preservation of cultural heritage;
- according to current trends on tourism markets, the attractiveness of well preserved rural areas with genuine cultural resources is increasing;
- the agro-tourism pension and the mastering of popular art should not be the only means to value the rural cultural heritage;
- rural population's contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage should generate immediate benefit for it.

These elements are derived by applying a new perspective for the management of resources that encounter difficulties in accessing market, meanwhile being considered valuable for the society. This perspective is commonly used in ecosystem management and it is based on the theory of externalities (Ioan et al. 2010).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Culture and economy have many field where could yield a fruitful interaction. Tourism is the means of it, being an industry that extracts the value accumulated through historical development in various forms of cultural expression: songs, music, traditions, customs, costumes, crafts, architecture, historical sites, monasteries etc. This combination proved to be successful in many situations, especially in case of cities with a rich historical and artistic background. The equation is true in the area also, but there are more factors that prevent it to materialize like that.

Some of these factors could be poor knowledge and, consequently poor management of cultural resources, lack of comprehensive assessment of benefits and costs, addiction to business as the only means for delivering certain services. Many of them could be reduced or avoided by o more intense implication of local public administration. This means integrated approach of planning, impact assessment, and marketing and promotion. Interpreting heritage preservation as a positive externality of rural living could add the list of "to do" for administration.

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